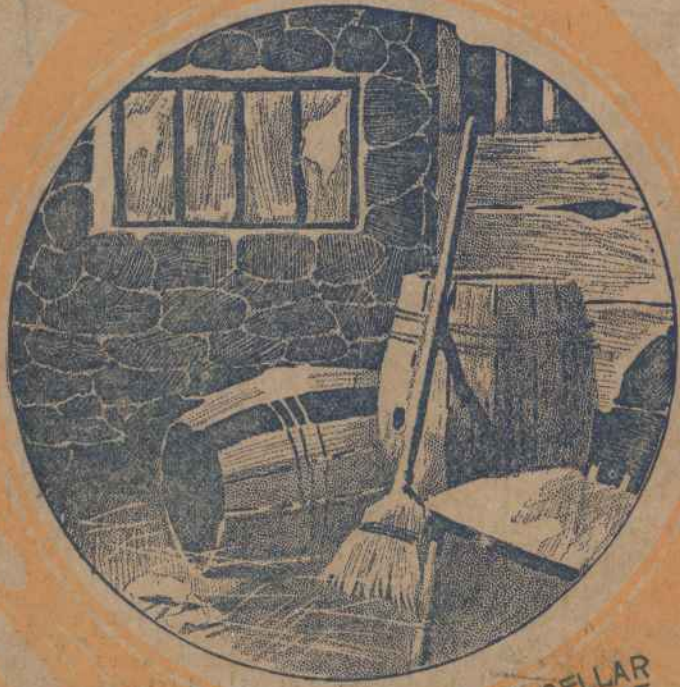


HAS THE LONG LOST 'GAINSBOROUGH' BEEN FOUND AT LAST?



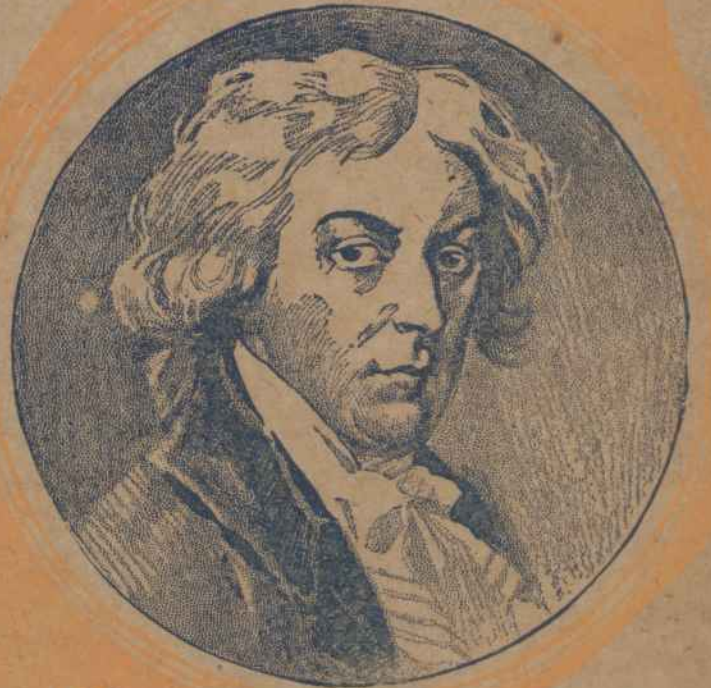
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HEARST.



THE CELLAR
WHERE THE
PAINTING
WAS FOUND



THE DUCHESS OF
DEVONSHIRE
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FROM
THE ORIGINAL PAINTING



THOMAS
GAINSBOROUGH
PHOTOGRAPHED FROM
A PAINTING

The Vestry of Chelsea, in England,
Claim to Have Discovered
the Stolen
Picture of the Duchess of
Devonshire,
England's Priceless Masterpiece,
Covered with Cobwebs Down
in a Cellar.

GAINSBOROUGH'S immortal portrait of
Duchess of Devonshire, the disappearance
of which twenty-two years ago is the most
mysterious event in the modern annals of art and
crime, has, it is claimed, been discovered at last in
a cellar in London.

The police of two continents sought and hunted
the thieves in vain for years. Not only the Scotland
Yard officers in London, but Inspector Byrnes, the
most astute detective in the world, and his ablest
assistants, were baffled by this crime. It was long
believed that the picture had been taken to Amer-
ica. Adam Worth, a notorious American burglar,
sentenced to imprisonment in Brussels, was sus-
pected of the crime, but it could not be fastened on
him.

This picture—Gainsborough's masterpiece—is the
most perfect type of loveliness ever created by an
English artist. In 1876 it was sold at auction, with
the collection of Mr. Wynn Ellis. Messrs. Agnew
paid \$50,000 for it. It was an exhibition for eighteen
days and created an immense sensation in London.
It brought the picture hat into fashion.

Then a thief entered the gallery in the night, cut
the picture from its frame and carried it away. No
trace of the thief could ever be found. He sent
repeated letters to the owners apparently in bra-
vado. Every effort was made to find him, but in
vain.

Now a vestryman of Chelsea, London, has found
the great picture dirty and disfigured in the bottom
of an old cellar.

AND it be that the mystery that has enveloped
a famous stolen painting for years is about
to be cleared up?

Thomas Gainsborough's portrait of
Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, was the
most perfect type of English loveliness ever
created by an artist's brush.

Twenty-two years ago it was stolen and its whereabouts
has remained a mystery since then. The mystery was
heightened by the fact that the owner was willing to pay
a large price for the return of the picture, without seeking
to punish the thief, and that the latter was probably aware
of this.

Now it seems that the mystery may be cleared away.
But the end is not quite yet.

A vestryman of Chelsea, a district of London, is reported
to have discovered the stolen picture. The vestry is the
local governing body, and a vestryman belongs to the class
of humanity characterized by Dickens in "Bumble."

This vestryman, in the course of his duties, which lead
him to inquire into bad smells and other nuisances, had
occasion to investigate a big old house in Smith street,
Chelsea.

The house was dirty, tumble down, containing odds
and ends of old furniture, and inhabited only by one old
woman. She was dark and mysterious in her ways. Al-
though she was so poor that she was not able to obtain
sufficient food, she ate from splendid silver plate. Evi-
dently she was disinclined to tell it. It has since been
learned that she was formerly housekeeper for a notorious
American burglar, who is now serving a long term of im-
prisonment for a daring train robbery on the European
continent.

The vestryman had to pay another official visit to the
house. The old woman had then left it. This time he went
down into the cellar, a large place, filled with old furniture
and rubbish. Groping in the dark, he knocked his foot
against what appeared to be a light wooden frame.

He struck a match and found the object to be a picture,
in a sad state of dirt and disfigurement.

Closer scrutiny revealed the vague outlines of a
woman's figure. She wore a great black hat, and a red
flower was discernible at her bosom.

Considering the suspicious associations of the previous
occupant of the house and the evident age of the picture,
the vestryman at once concluded that it might be a stolen
work of some value. A little investigation brought to his
knowledge the story of the stolen Gainsborough.

He communicated with Sir George Lewis, the lawyer of
Messrs. Agnew, the great dealers, from whom the work
had originally been stolen. As a result, young Mr. Agnew
visited the cellar in Smith street under the guidance of the
vestryman. He was much impressed by the resemblance
of the picture to the lost Gainsborough. He returned in
haste to Bond street and brought his father back to Smith
street. The latter is said to have exhibited great emotion
on seeing the canvas, and to have exclaimed:

"That is the picture for which I paid \$10,000."

The Agnews then requested the vestryman to purchase
the picture from the present occupant of the house for
as little as possible and without calling attention to its
value. They promised to recompense him. The vestryman
acquiesced in the manner suggested, but then
he refused to part with it for less than \$1,000, the reward
the Agnews had originally offered for the recovery of the
picture. This, for some reason, the Agnews refused to pay.

It is now reported that the vestryman is unwilling to
part with the masterpiece at any price.

Before coming to a disagreement with the vestryman,
the Messrs. Agnew presented him with a magnificent steel
engraving of the lost Gainsborough as a token of his
services to art in returning so great a treasure to the
world.

The case is now involved in some complexity. The ves-
tryman apparently thinks that the Gainsborough will form
a valuable ornament to his home. The Agnews are unwill-
ing to discuss the matter publicly.

The possession of stolen property, no matter how inno-
cently acquired, has no right to it, but in order to recover
it the real owner must prove his title. This in the case of
a picture lost for twenty-two years would present con-
siderable difficulties, especially as there are many copies

of the Gainsborough in existence, and some of them were
quite hard to distinguish from the original. It is undoubt-
edly for this reason that the Agnews are preserving silence
and stimulating inactivity.

The statute of limitations would now prevent the pro-
secution of the thief. His evidence, however, would be of
vital importance to the Agnews in helping them to regain
their property. They have, therefore, caused the old
search for him to be renewed with increased vigor. It is
now being pursued quietly but indefatigably in the United
Kingdom, on the European continent, and in the United
States.

The Gainsborough Duchess belonged to the collection
of Mr. Wynn Ellis, one of the finest in England. The
sale of this collection at Christie's auction rooms in London
was a historical event in the English art world.

The Gainsborough was offered for sale on May 6, 1876.
A great battle of amateurs ensued. The Earl of Dudley
ran the price up to \$50,000, but seeing that the Agnews
were determined to possess the picture, he retired from
the fight when they offered \$30,000.

The Agnews placed it on exhibition in their galleries at
25 Bond street, London went into ecstasies over it. The
so-called picture hat, modelled on the hat of the lovely
Duchess, then came into tremendous popularity. It has
been more or less fashionable ever since and there are
those who believe that in spite of occasional vulgar ex-
travagances there is no form of hat which better becomes
a handsome woman.

While the fashionable and popular interest was at its
height, the picture vanished. On the night of May 24,
eighteen days after it came into the Agnews' possession,
it was left as usual in its place on the wall. A watchman
sleep on the premises and was not disturbed. During that
night, however, thieves entered the gallery, cut the picture
from its frame and carried it away.

The Scotland Yard detectives failed to obtain the least
scent of the thieves. From time to time Mr. Agnew re-
ceived mysterious letters offering to return the picture, at
first for \$1,000 and then for \$1,750. In several cases the
writer inclosed pieces of the canvas to show that he really
had the picture.

Apparently the thief was merely writing these letters
in a spirit of bravado and, if he possessed the picture,
had no intention of returning it. Perhaps he intended to
keep it to decorate his home, when he should retire from
a long life of successful burglary to an old age of affluent
ease.

At one time it was suspected that the thief was Adam
Worth, an American burglar of note, who served a term of
imprisonment in Brussels, Belgium, and was convicted on
the evidence of Max Schiborn, now in Lannemora prison,
New York. It was impossible, however, to trace the deed
clearly to him.

It was generally believed in England that the theft was
the work of some daring American burglar and that the
picture had been carried to America. The efforts of In-
spector Byrnes, the most astute detective in the world,
were enlisted, but he was utterly baffled by the case.

While we may presume that the picture itself will soon
be restored to the world, the manner of its disappearance
will still be unrevealed.

Gainsborough was one of the greatest of English paint-
ers, ranking as an equal with Sir Joshua Reynolds. He
lived from 1727 to 1788. His "Duchess of Devonshire" was
the finest picture he ever painted.

(Continued on Next Page.)